

Three-cent piece? It's worth more today

By Roger Boye

HERE ARE some numismatic questions from readers:

• Q.—My father died two months ago. Among his things is an odd-looking coin with a large Roman numeral III on the back. The front side shows the head of a person. Could you tell me anything about this coin?—R.A., Oak Lawn

A.—The coin is a U.S. three-cent piece made of 75 per cent copper and 25 per cent nickel from 1865 to 1889. All of these "nickel" three-cent pieces were minted in Philadelphia.

The government began making these coins to retire

three-cent fractional currency notes made during the Civil War [see following question]. The obverse shows the head of Liberty and the reverse depicts a Roman numeral surrounded by a wreath of laurel.

The government also made a three-cent piece of a different design, containing silver, from 1851 to 1873 [but in proof only after 1862].

Common-date nickel three-cent pieces sell for about \$6 in fine condition. Rarer dates, such as an 1885, sell for about \$30 in fine condition.

• Q.—I have a piece of U.S. paper currency in 25 cent denomination and dated 1874. Is it a collector's

item or is it worthless? Also, could you tell me the value of three \$1 silver certificates, series 1928A, 1928B and 1928D? G. D., La Grange

A.—Your 25 cents denomination note is indeed a collector's item, assuming it is in good or better condition. It is part of about \$300 million worth of "fractional currency" issued by the U.S. government from 1862 to 1876 during a period of acute coin shortages. The currency was issued in denominations of 3, 5, 10, 15, 25, and 50 cents. Your note is one of the more common; it sells for about \$3 in good condition.

The 1928A and 1928B silver certificates are fairly com-

mon, selling for about \$5 in fine condition. The 1928D note, signed by W. A. Julian and W. H. Woodin, is more valuable. It sells for about \$75 in fine condition.

• Q.—I have some German coins dating from 1300. Could you advise me where I could get information about them?—J. B., Round Lake

A.—Check a public library. Four books which might help you are "Germanic Coinages" by W. D. Craig, "Copper Coins of German States" by O. P. Eklund, "The Dated European Coinage Prior to 1501" by A. R. Frey, and "The Coinage of the European Continent" by W. C. Hazlitt.

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